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In re Application of
Figov, et al.
Application No. 09/525,579
Filed: July 24, 1998
Attorney Docket No. 0866/OE519

OFFICE OF PETITIONS

ON PETITION

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a), filed February 17, 2004, to revive the above-identified application.

The petition is **DISMISSED**.

Any further petition to revive the above-identified application must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Petition under 37 CFR 1.137." This is **not** final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 704.

The above-identified application became abandoned for failure to timely submit a \$790.00 basic filing fee, a \$86.00 excess independent claim fee, and a surcharge for the late filing of the filing fee and/or declaration within an extendable two month period from the mail date of the September 27, 2002 petition decision. No timely reply was received by the Office. Accordingly, the above-identified application became abandoned on November 28, 2002. A Notice of Abandonment was mailed on October 23, 2003.

Petitioner asserts that the delay in responding to the requirement set in the September 27, 2002 petition decision was unavoidable because the attorneys of record did not inform petitioner of the requirements set in the September 27, 2002 petition decision.

A grantable petition to revive an abandoned application under 37 CFR 1.137(a) must be accompanied by (1) the required reply, unless previously filed. In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof; (2) the petition fee as set forth in § 1.17(l); (3) a showing to the satisfaction of

the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to this paragraph was unavoidable; and (4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in § 1.20 (d)) required pursuant to paragraph ©) of this section. This petition does not satisfy requirement (3).

Regarding (3), the showing of record is inadequate to establish unavoidable delay within the meaning of 37 CFR 1.137(a). Specifically, an application is "unavoidably" abandoned only where petitioner, or counsel for petitioner, takes all action necessary for a proper response to the outstanding Office action, but through the intervention of unforeseen circumstances, such as failure of mail, telegraph, telefacsimile, or the negligence of otherwise reliable employees, the response is not timely received in the Office. Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31 (Comm'r Pat. 1887).

The Commissioner may revive an abandoned application if the delay in responding to the relevant outstanding Office requirement is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been "unavoidable". 35 USC § 133. Decisions on reviving abandoned applications have adopted the reasonably prudent person standard in determining if the delay was unavoidable. Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31, 32-33 (Comm'r Pat. 1887)(the term 'unavoidable' "is applicable to ordinary human affairs, and requires no more or greater care or diligence than is generally used and observed by prudent and careful men in relation to their most important business"); In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497, 514-15 (D.C. Cir. 1912); Ex parte Henrich, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141 (Comm'r Pat. 1913). In addition, decisions on revival are made on a "case-by-case basis, taking all the facts and circumstances into account." Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 USPQ 977, 982 (D.C. Cir. 1982). Finally, a petition to revive an application as unavoidably abandoned cannot be granted where a petitioner has failed to meet his or her burden of establishing the cause of the unavoidable delay. Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 5 USPQ2d 1130 (N.D. Ind. 1987).

In the instant case, petitioner has failed to provide adequate evidence that the entire delay in responding to the requirements set in the September 27, 2002 petition decision was unavoidable. On January 11, 2001 an assignment from the inventors to Scitex Corporation Limited was recorded in the Office and Scitex Corporation Limited appointed members of the Eitan, Pearl firm to represent them. The September 27, 2002 petition decision was mailed to the attorneys of record at the Eitan, Pearl firm.

Petitioner asserts that the delay in fulfilling the requirements set in the September 27, 2002 petition decision was unavoidable because the attorneys of record did not inform Darby & Darby of the requirements set in the September 27, 2002 petition decision. It is noted that members of the Darby & Darby firm were not empowered until November 25, 2003.

The Office must rely on the actions or inactions of the duly authorized and voluntarily chosen representatives of the applicant, and the applicant is bound by the consequences of those actions or inactions. Link v. Wabash, 370 U.S. 626, 633-34 (1962). If the attorney made any errors,

petitioner is bound by such errors.¹

The attorney must act reasonably and prudently.

If [the] attorney somehow breach[es] his duty of care to plaintiff, then plaintiff may have certain other remedies available to him against his attorney. He cannot, however, ask the court to overlook [the attorney's] action or inaction with regard to the patent application. He hired the [attorney] to represent him. [The attorney's] actions must be imputed to him.²

The Seventh Circuit has stated,

The other assumption is that, if the complainants failed in their application through the negligence of their attorney, the delay would be unavoidable, which is wholly unwarranted in the law. It is of the very nature of negligence that it should not be unavoidable, otherwise it would not be actionable. The negligence of the attorney would be the negligence of the [client]. The purpose of the statute was to put an end to such pleas, and there would be no limit to a renewal of these applications if every application, however remote, could be considered under the plea of negligence of attorneys, by whom their business is generally conducted.³

The United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit has stated,

If we were to hold that an attorney's negligence constitutes good cause for failing to meet a PTO requirement, the PTO's rules could become meaningless. Parties could regularly allege attorney negligence in order to avoid an unmet requirement.⁴

In determining whether a delay was unavoidable, one looks to whether the party in interest

¹ See California Med. Products v. Technol Med. Products, 921 F. Supp. 1219, 1259 (D. Del. 1995) (citing Smith v. Diamond, 209 U.S.P.Q. 1091, 1093 (D.D.C. 1981) (citing Link v. Walbash Railroad Co., 370 U.S. 626, 8 L. Ed. 2d 734, 82 S. Ct. 1386 (1962))).

² Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 317, 5 U.S.P.Q. 2d (BNA) 1130 (citing Link v. Walbash Railroad Co., 370 U.S. 626, 8 L. Ed. 2d 734, 82 S. Ct. 1386 (1962)) ("Petitioner voluntarily chose his attorney as his representative in the action and he cannot now avoid the consequences of the acts or omissions of this freely selected agent ... Each party is deemed bound by the acts of his lawyer-agent and is considered to have 'notice of all facts, notice of which can be charged upon the attorney.'" (emphasis added); Inryco, Inc. v. Metropolitan Engineering Co., Inc., 708 F.2d 1225, 1233 (7th Cir. 1983) ("Courts hesitate to punish a client for its lawyers gross negligence, especially when the lawyer affirmatively misled the client" but "if the client freely chooses counsel, it should be bound to counsel's actions."); see also Wei v. State of Hawaii, 763 F. 2d 370, 372 (9th Cir. 1985); LeBlanc v. I.N.S., 715 F.2d 685, 694 (1st Cir. 1983)). See also Smith v. Diamond, 209 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 1091 (D. D.C. 1981).

³ Lay v. Indianapolis Brush & Broom Mfg. Co., 120 F. 831, 836 (1903).

⁴ Huston v. Ladner, 973 F.2d 1564, 1567, 23 U.S.P.Q.2D (BNA) 1910 (Fed. Cir. 1992).

In determining whether a delay was unavoidable, one looks to whether the party in interest exercised the due care of a reasonably prudent person at the time action was required. Ray, 55 F.3d at 609-609, 34 USPQ2d at 1787.

It is noted that an assignment from the Scitex Corporation Limited to KBK (Advanced Imaging Technology)(Israel)Limited was not recorded until November 10, 2003. Until that point, in the eyes of the Office, Scitex Corporation Limited was the assignee of record and Scitex Corporation Limited could do with the application as it saw fit.

The September 27, 2002 petition decision was mailed to the address of record – the Eitan, Pearl firm. The fact that the Eitan, Pearl firm was not diligent in responding to the requirements set in the September 27, 2002 is unfortunate. However, Eitan, Pearl attorneys/agents were properly empowered and it was their responsibility to respond timely to the September 27, 2002 petition decision. Their neglect is attributable to their client, Scitex Corporation Limited, which was the assignee of record when the application became abandoned.

The desires and diligence of the current assignee do not negate or supersede the inattention of the assignee of record and its empowered representatives at the time the application went abandoned.

ALTERNATIVE VENUE

The facts recited in the instant petition are those typically encountered in a petition to revive under an unintentional standard. Petitioner should consider filing a petition stating that the delay was unintentional. Public Law 97-247, § 3, 96 Stat. 317 (1982), which revised patent and trademark fees, amended 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) to provide for the revival of an “unintentionally” abandoned application without a showing that the delay in prosecution or in late payment of an issue fee was “unavoidable.” This amendment to 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) has been implemented in 37 CFR 1.137(b). An “unintentional” petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by the \$ 1,330.00 petition fee.

The filing of a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) cannot be intentionally delayed and therefore must be filed promptly. A person seeking revival due to unintentional delay can not make a statement that the delay was unintentional unless the entire delay, including the delay from the date it was discovered that the application was abandoned until the filing of the petition to revive under 37 CFR 1.137(b), was unintentional. A statement that the delay was unintentional is not appropriate if petitioner intentionally delayed the filing of a petition for revival under 37 CFR 1.137(b).

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